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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Friday, November 26, 1943

SUBJECT: "LEFTOVERS THAT DON'T GET "LEFT." Information from Home Economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Almost every woman's a collector at heart. Some collect teaspoons...some go in for antique furniture or china teacups. But there's one collecting hobby that's altogether too popular--that's the business of collecting odds and ends of food left over from meals...keeping them carefully for about a week...and then, come refrigerator-cleaning day, throwing them all away!

It's an unusual kitchen that doesn't harbor a few souvenirs of past meals...a dish of mashed potatoes from Sunday dinner...half a grapefruit from yesterday's breakfast...or a few pieces of stale bread. Now we're all hearing a lot this month about making Food Fight for Freedom. We know we must produce... conserve...share and play square with food. Saving leftovers definitely is the right thing to do to help food fight for freedom...but it's definitely not the right thing to save leftovers until they "get left."

The food we waste each year in our homes would feed the larger part of all our army and navy. But food is precious so conserving food is one of the homemaker's most important jobs. Today, to help with that job, the home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, suggest ways for converting leftovers into interesting dishes.

Of course, you sometimes cook a double batch of food with the intention of having enough for two meals. But most often leftovers just happen--and that's when you need to add imagination to your other equipment for cooking. Leftovers have a way of resembling Cinderella before she met her fairy godmother. But, like the fairy godmother, you can transform the Cinderella foods of your

kitchen into attractive dishes that your family will enjoy.

Before going into the subject of cooking leftovers, let's talk about storing them. "Cold and covered" is the rule for keeping most leftovers attractive and nourishing. And another slogan about storage might be, "Make it snappy." Use leftover foods as soon as possible...if they stand around a long time, they won't taste good or look good-and remember, air is a robber of vitamins.

If leftovers are "congenial", store them together. For example, [illegible] potatoes, peas, and carrots can all go into the same little jar or covered dish. Keep two jars for juice in the refrigerator: one for fruit juices, and one for the cooking liquid from vegetables. Fruit juices can go into a chilled fruit drink...or into gelatin salad. Vegetable liquors can give flavor and vitamins to soups, cream sauce, or vegetable juice drinks.

Potatoes are one of the most adaptable leftovers. They keep well, too, especially if you cook them in the jackets. Leftover potatoes fit nicely into soup, stew, or salad...they're good hash browned, creamed, or browned whole with a touch of onion. Mashed potatoes don't keep quite so well as boiled ones, so use them within two or three days. They make a fine lining or topping for a vegetable or meat pie...or, add an egg and a bit of milk for a baked potato puff.

Dabs of vegetables may look like pretty hopeless leftovers, but try combining them with a white sauce, or a tomato sauce and onion, for a delicious vegetable scallop. And how long is it since you've tried a vegetable "pasty"--a big turnover filled with mixed vegetables, and served with gravy or a barbecue sauce. Tag ends of vegetables can also go into soup, salads, or sandwich fillings.

If you throw away the hard ends of cheese, you're wasting good proteins

and ration points. These hard pieces of cheese, grated, add good flavor to white sauce, casserole dishes, and soups.

Leftover egg yolks, poached, make a nutritious and eye-catching garnish for creamed dishes, salads, and green vegetables. Or, use extra yolks in sandwich fillings.

You can do any number of tricks with leftover cooked cereal. Re-heat it next morning with chopped dried fruit...chill it, slice, and fry, and serve with sirup or honey...combine it with scrambled eggs...or use it as a binder for meat loaf or meat balls.

You don't need anyone to tell you that every smidgen of meat has to be used up, these days. But maybe you're low on ideas for repeat performances of yesterday's meat course. Of course there's always chop suey...stuffed green peppers or cabbage leaves...or meat and vegetable pie topped with pastry, mashed potatoes, or crusty biscuits. How about meat shortcake...creamed leftovers served on split biscuits? Open-face sandwiches with hot gravy are a nice way to use yesterday's roast or meatloaf. Or you might try a French-toasted sandwich...ground meat spread between two slices of bread, then the whole sandwich dipped in egg-and-milk batter, and browned on both sides in a little fat.

One of the foods we Americans are most prodigal with, is bread. Watch that breadbox...when a loaf begins to dry out, make toast...French toast... cinnamon or milk toast. Combine bread with fruit or custard in a pudding. Make bread stuffing for peppers, chops, fish, or poultry. Or--run dry bread through your food chopper and store the crumbs for later use in scalloped and breaded dishes.

Using up leftovers may not sound like a glamorous war job, but it's one of the most important things you, as an individual, can do for the war. To make food do its fighting best, all of us will have to produce and conserve food ...share and play square with food. And if you make good use of the leftovers in your kitchen ...instead of throwing them away...you'll be cutting down the huge waste of good food that we Americans have always been guilty of. What's more, you'll be making just that much more food available for the war.

So keep a sharp eye on the refrigerator and the breadbox. Squandering good food is out. See that your leftovers don't "get left."